3: Ryden E-4 (no date) 1935 SQ20 Tucuna SQ20

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MAN

A MONTHLY RECORD OF ANTHROPOLOGICAL SCIENCE.

[Title Page]

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XXXV, 183-197 NOVEMBER, 1935

ORIGINAL ARTICLES.

America, South: Technology. **With Plate L.** **Rydén.**

Notes on a Knitting Technique from the Tukuna Indians, Brazil. *By Stig Rydén, Gothenburg (Göteborg) Museum, Sweden.*

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In a collection from the Tukuna (Ticuna) Indians, acquired by the German-born Brazilian explorer Curt Nimuendajú in 1929 on Rio Solimões for the Gothenburg Museum, are, *inter alia*, preserved two carrying-nets (Figs. 1 and 3) (Nimuendajú, Curt: *Besuch bei den Tukuna-Indianern*, Ethnologischer Anzeiger Bd. II: 4, Stuttgart, 1930, sid. 188). In one of these nets (Fig. 1) the mouth is kept open with a narrow wooden branch bent into a circular hoop, while in the other (Fig. 2) no such arrangement is found, but a cord for carrying is provided instead. Both nets are manufactured of vegetable fibre, and the knitting technique employed is seen in detail in Fig. 2. The Tukuna collection also includes a partly finished carrying-net (Fig. 4). From this unfinished piece of work it is evident that the loops were formed by means of a bone needle on a thin sliver of uniform thickness, probably cut out from the skin of the petiole of a palm leaf. The sliver is allowed to remain in the net until the knitting is completed, whereupon it is broken up and removed. The presence of this uniformly thick sliver ensures that the loops of the net are all turned out even-sized. In this case the sliver performs a function corresponding to that of a mesh gauge, and the retention of the sliver in the meshes while knitting is going on tends to make the net more easily handled as the work continues. The method of forming the loops on the sliver will be apparent from Fig. 5.

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Koch-Grünberg (*Zwei Jahre unter den Indianern*, Berlin, 1909–10, Part II, Figs. 12, 13, p. 30) depicts a number of fishing implements from Rio Aiáry, in Brazil, where the same knitting technique has been employed as in the carrying-nets of the Tukuna. These fishing implements are designed for catching small fish and crabs, and consist of a more or less circular net kept open by means of a bent twig. These smaller-sized fishing nets are, in contradistinction from the larger variety, among the Rio Aiáry Indians always woven in the technique just referred to. As to the method employed in the weaving of these nets nothing is mentioned by Koch-Grünberg. It may, however, be supposed that they were manufactured by the same method as were the carrying-nets of the Tukuna tribe. For it may be noted that Koch-Grünberg in the same connection illustrates a "network basket" for crab-fishing, and in this basket the sliver is still left in the finished article, that is to say, the knitting technique is identical with that of the Tukuna net prior to the breaking up of the sliver.

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Already in the earliest treatise known to me on South American knitting technique, a brief essay published by P. Radin in 1906 (*Zeitschrift für Ethnologie*, Band 38, Berlin, 1906, p. 938), the author's attention is turned to the technique here dealt with. At that time very little authentic material was available, and scantier still were data as to methods of manufacture. Thus he supposes that in the knitting *two* slivers were used, one that was pushed in for the purpose of securing in their places the loops already formed, and another for determining the size of the loops.

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It is not impossible that the knitting technique here described constitutes a development of a certain basket-weaving method, *viz.*, the so-called coiled basketry technique. Especially striking is the similarity between this knitting technique and the variant of coiled technique that occurs in

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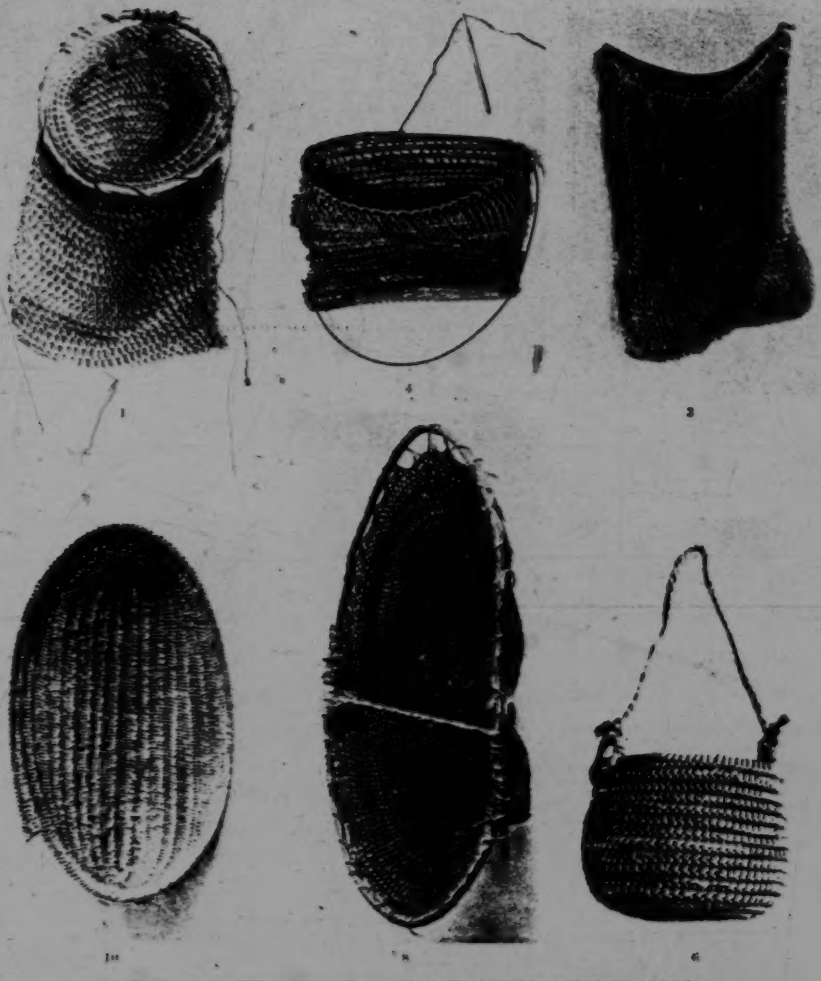

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KNITTED BASKET-WORK FROM THE TUKUNA INDIANS, BRAZIL.

GOTHENBURG MUSEUM.

For descriptions see note on page 163.

[Facing p 161]

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Mende FC7
Ona SH4

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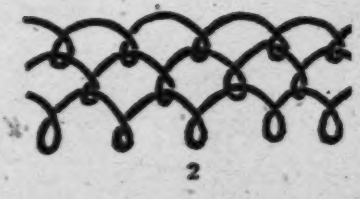

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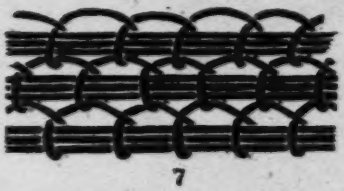

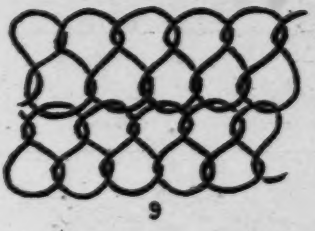

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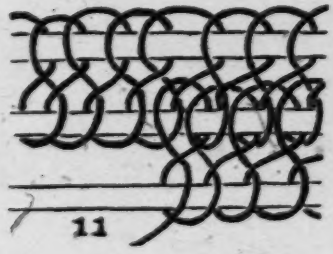

Tierra del Fuego. A basket from the Ona tribe executed in this technique is depicted in Fig. 6, of which a detail is shown in Fig. 7. This particular basket is probably made of some kind of grass. This basketry technique is, however, so far as I know, absent in the Amazonas region, while on the other hand there exists to this day among the Apinayé and Canellas Indians of eastern Brazil the variant of the coiled technique in which the ultimate spiral is fastened to the last but one by pulling the connecting string *through* the next foregoing instead of—as in Fig. 7—*making a loop* round the whole of it. (*Cf.* Mason, Otis T., *Directions for collectors of American basketry*, Smithsonian Institution. Part P of *Bulletin of the United States National Museum*, No. 39, Washington, 1902, Fig. 31). This technique occurs besides also in other localities in the Amazonas region. Coiled technique is nowadays almost entirely discarded by the two Brazilian tribes just referred to, but was formerly no doubt considerably more widely distributed in South America. In that continent it seems to be steadily dying out.

In another work of Mason (*Aboriginal American Basketry*, Annual Report of the Board of the Smithsonian Institution, Report of the U.S. National Museum, Washington, 1904, p. 248), he has also pointed out the similarity between the knitting technique here dealt with (Fig. 2) and the coiled technique employed in basketry manufacture, and describes it as "looking "as all-coiled basketry would if the foundation were "removed." Again he says of it: "Further on "illustrations will be given showing the wide extent "of this technical process of coiled basketry without "foundation. Examples in the U.S. National Museum "come from as far south as Paraguay and even the "Straits of Magellan. It is in common use as far "north as northern Mexico. Both the possession of "different material and the demands of a tropical life "have occasioned the employment of this particular "technic in articles of common use about the "household. Its relation to coiled basketry and bead "work is shown by the fact that women in making "the fabric use a needle to carry the thread or string "around through the row of work proceeding. A "small rod or mesh gauge is used to secure uniformity "in the size of the meshes." In the last-mentioned work (Fig. 204) Mason, besides, depicts an Arawak woman with a carrying-net executed in the technique seen in Fig. 5; i.e., with the wooden sliver left in.

FIGURES 2, 5, 7, 9, 11. KNITTING TECHNIQUES: TUCUNA INDIANS, BRAZIL.

For descriptions see note on p. 163.

[i.e., coiled. -Analyst]

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Ona SH6

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It is not impossible, however, that the knitting technique recorded from the Tukuna Indians—in which a sliver is employed—may have originated in African regions. For it may be noted that in the West African collections, which have been added to the Gothenburg Museum by the explorer G. Bolinder, there is a woman's fishing net (Fig. 8) from the Mendi tribe of central Sierra Leone, exhibiting the technique illustrated in Fig. 9. Bolinder's collection also includes a similar net half-finished (Fig. 10) from the same tribe. This piece of work discloses that in this case, too, the loops have been formed on a uniformly thick sliver which is broken up and removed when the work process is completed, that is to say, in the manner used by the Tukuna. The actual knitting technique is, however, as will be seen, somewhat different in each case. The Mendi net is woven of fibre strings, and in the technique generally known as a 'figure-of-eight,' or double loop (Fig. 9). The method of forming this kind of loop by means of a sliver of uniform thickness will be apparent from Fig. 11. The figure-of-eight loop is not unknown in South America. It occurs, for example, frequently in knitted caraguata satchels in the Chaco, although these are always woven without the aid of a sliver or mesh gauge, and the piece of knitting under process is made more easy to handle by keeping it extended between two sticks planted perpendicularly in the ground. For the distribution of the figure-of-eight loop, *see* Erland Nordenskiöld, *An ethnographical analysis of the material culture of two Indian tribes in the Gran Chaco* (Comparative Ethnographical Studies I), Gothenburg, 1919, p. 201. The Gothenburg Museum possesses a partly finished satchel from French Congo (Bakuba), made in the same simple loop technique as the Tukuna carrying-nets. As to the actual mode of manufacture, this differs however in this case from that of the latter. The sliver is left in the last row of loops made, and is evidently pushed forward as the work proceeds. Hence it will be seen that the technique is identical, but the sliver has lost its function of constituting a support for the fabric while the work is progressing, and only acts as a gauge for effecting a uniform size in the loops or meshes.

It is not impossible that the method dealt with above (that of forming the loops on a mesh gauge left in all through the process of finishing the net) was introduced into the Amazonas region by negroes. The West Coast of Africa constituted, as we know, the principal recruiting area of the slave hunters, the eastern coast of Brazil being a not unimportant market for this trade. It is only natural that those negroes brought along with them to their new home country a considerable number of their old culture elements and manufacturing methods.

STIG. RYDÉN.

DESCRIPTION OF THE ILLUSTRATIONS IN PLATE K AND IN THE TEXT.

Fig. 1. Carrying-net. Tukuna. Depth, 20 cm.
„ 2. Knitting technique in carrying-nets, figs. 1 and 3.
„ 3. Satchel with carrying strap. Tukuna. Depth, 35 cm.
„ 4. Satchel, half-finished. Tukuna. Width, 20 cm.
„ 5. Detail of net, fig. 4.
„ 6. Basket. Ona. Width, 12 cm.
Fig. 7. Knitting technique in basket, fig. 6.
„ 8. Woman's fishing net. Mendi. Central Sierra Leone. Depth, 80 cm., width, 45 cm.
„ 9. Detail of net, fig. 8.
„ 10. Fishing net, half finished. Mendi. Central Sierra Leone. Greatest width, 28 cm.
„ 11. Detail of net, fig. 10.

All the above objects form part of the Gothenburg Museum collections.

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